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AUTHOR Acredolo, Linda; Goodwyn, Susan
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ABSTRACT

Recent research points to the inborn abilities of infants and shows how early experiences influence cognitive skills. This book presents activities for parents and their infants--building on activities babies instinctively love--to develop their unique abilities. The book is organized around six intellectual skills: (1) problem solving; (2) memory; (3) language; (4) reading; (5) mathematical thinking; and (6) creative thinking. The book uses a "News Flash" format to link early infant competencies to each of these six specific skills. The book's introduction discusses research techniques used to examine the competencies of young infants. Chapter 1, "Your Baby's Amazing Brain," examines early brain development and the importance of early experience. Chapter 2, "What's Love Got To Do with It?," presents important cautions and concerns to guide parents' interaction with their infants, including the significance of attachment, following the child's lead, active learning, and parental scaffolding of infant learning. Chapter 3, "Figuring Out the World: Problem Solving," addresses the problem-solving process, including contingencies, imitation, and expectancies. Chapter 4, "Memory 101: The Foundations of Learning," deals with various types of memory: recognition, recall, autobiographical. Chapter 5, "Baby Signs and First Words: Learning To Talk," focuses on infants' signs and first words, pretend play, and dialogic book reading. Chapter 6, "Letters, Rhymes, and Love of Books: Preparing to Read," discusses shape discrimination, phonemic awareness, and book interest. Chapter 7, "Counting Really Counts: Thinking about Numbers," concerns number awareness, counting, and early musical training. Chapter 8, "Scribbles, Jokes, and Imaginary Friends: Fostering Creativity," addresses drawing, humor, imaginary friends, and pretend play. Chapter 9, "Putting It All Together, notes that each of the skills discussed in the book depends to varying degrees upon all the others. The book concludes with a list summarizing the suggested activities. (Contains 61 references.) (KB)

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